
COINS

Taping down your coins turns into a sticky situation

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about old and unusual coins.

Q—Years ago, we used Scotch tape to attach several Indian-head pennies to cardboard. We thought the tape would protect the coins, but instead it left terrible smudges. Is there anything we can do?—T. J., Woodstock

A—Some collectors use fingernail polish to remove the marks left by tape while others try soaking the coins in water. But avoid rubbing your cents or treating them with any substance that would harm the metal.

Q—I have a quarter with two "tail sides" and no heads side, and I'm positive it's not altered. What's my piece worth?—A. P., Chicago

A—This is one of the most often-asked questions in collecting, and the answer remains: Your quarter is a fake.

Most likely, forgers created the piece by splitting two quarters and then soldering the two tails sides. The joint is often extremely difficult to detect.

No authentic two-headed or two-tailed U.S. coins are known to exist, and experts say that government equipment can't produce such coins, even by accident.

Q—A few weeks ago I heard the last few seconds of a television story about the fact that dimes dated 1973 are rare. Since then, I've been saving lots of them. Is that wise?—G. J., Dolton

A—Uncle Sam produced nearly 800 million dimes in 1973. They are an extremely common date worth only 10 cents each. Spend your hoard.

Q—My great grandfather put a hole in an 1898 half dollar so he could wear the coin on a watch chain. What might the piece be worth today?—V. M., Moline

A—Coins with holes generally have little collector value. Likewise, nicks, scratches, and smudges make coins less desirable to collectors.